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WHY MAMMY DELPHY'S BABY WAS

NAMED GRIEF.

BY MOLLIE MOORE DAVIS.

Mammy Delphy was sitting out under

the vines that climbed over the kitchen

gallery, picking a chicken for dinner, and

singing. And she sang! Some of the

words ran this way:

Alde you see me go 'long so,

I has my trials here below,

Sometimes I's up, sometimes I's down,

Sometimes I's level wid de groun'.

Oh, git out, Satan!

And these words sound queer to you

as you read them, perhaps, but they did

not sound queer when Mammy Delphy

was singing them. I don't believe that

a song out of heaven could be sweeter

than this and other songs like it that dear

old Mammy sings, with her turbaned

head bobbing up and down and her foot

sofly keeping time to the melody. There

is a sort of plaintive—what shall I call it?

—that in her voice that makes you choke

up right about the throat, if you are a boy,

and sob right out if you are a girl. And it

makes you, somehow, remember, in hear-

ing it, all the sweet, and little stories that

your mother has told you about your lit-

tle baby sister who died before you were

born; or, if you have stood in some

darkened room, holding fast to some ten-

der and loving hand, and looking upon a

face that was dear to you lying upon its

cotton pillow, you think of that strange

and sad time. And with these thoughts

come, as you listen, other thoughts of fly-

ing angels and shining crowns, and wide

opened gates of pearl. A sweetness

mixed with pain—that is the feeling

Mammy Delphy's singing brings to you,

though you could not describe it, perhaps,

if you tried—at least that's the feeling it

brings to me.

I takes my shoes from off'n my feet,

And walk into de golden street,

Gory, Hallelu!

sang Mammy. Sam and Jim and Joe

came flying in. They had been—well,

where hadn't they been? They had been

down to the Bayou, which ran a good

quarter of a mile back of the place, fish-

ing for cat, and chucking at an unwary

rabbit that had taken refuge in a hollow

tree; they had been out in the field, cut-

ting open two or three half grown water-

melons to see if they were ripe; they had

been across the prairie to a mow of sweet

grass trees, where they had stuck up the

cuffs and bosoms of their shirts with gum

and tore their trousers in climbing a per-

mission tree to peep in a bird's nest. And

they were rushing across they had in chase

of a horned frog when they caught sight

of Mammy Delphy under the kitchen

shed.

Let's go and get Mammy Delphy to

give us some meat and go a-catch fish-

ing, suggested Sam.

And I'm hungry, for one, added Joe.

Accordingly they fled in, as I said, and

stood for a moment listening to Mammy

Delphy's song.

Give us somethin' to eat, Mammy,

please, said Jim.

An' some craw-fish bait and a piece of

string, put in the other two in a breath.

I ain't gwine to do it, chillun, replied

Mammy Delphy, giving them a gentle

push, with her elbow, for they were lean-

ing coaxingly against her shoulders. I

ain't a gwine to do it. Yer ma's got com-

ing for dinner and dat assy Marthy Ann

done tuck herself to 'Mancipation Day,

an' Jin, she totin' of Mis' May's baby to

sleep, an' I ain't got no time to waze on

yer, go 'long! And she spoke Mammy

arose, chicken in hand, and went into

the kitchen to get whatever the boys

wanted, as they were perfectly aware she

would from the beginning.

Lawsd' goodness! Jest look at dat lazy

nigger! Grief! she exclaimed as she en-

tered, Grief, yer lazy, good-for-nothin'

nigger, is yer gwine ter let dem sweet

taters burn clear up?

And seizing the collar of a negro man

who sat nodding by the stove, she gave

an' ridin' 'bout over de prairie in de

day time, and mos' every night dey call my

old man in to play de fiddle an' den,

laws, howdem young folks dance? An'

ole Mas' an' ole Mis' an' all de young

ladies used to come down to de cabin—

dey was all burnt up, time o' de war—

an' sakes, honey! de boss an' de cays-

ges an' de niggers an' disher big planta-

tion, all shute' wid corn and cotton!

Dem soon times! And Mammy's old eyes

lighted up as if she went back to her

youth and the glory of her family, for she

still speaks with pride of her family.

But grief, Mammy! said Jim.

Yes, honey, yes. Yer pappy an' Grief

were babies, and Grief war'n named, an'

Mas' Will an' Jerry was little boys, lit-

tle-er you.